



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

36 ILLEGAL WORKERS ARRESTED AT A NORTH CAROLINA DEFENSE CONTRACTING COMPANY

Arrests are the latest in ICE's law enforcement program targeting critical infrastructure and national security worksites.

DURHAM, NC – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, in conjunction with the Defense Criminal Investigative Service and the Social Security Administration, today arrested 36 foreign nationals who were working illegally for a government contractor that routinely performs work for the Department of Defense, NASA and the Department of Energy and two of its subcontractors.

ICE agents apprehended the individuals during a shift change at Cree, Inc, a manufacturer of electronic devices using silicon carbide semiconductor technology and other high technology devices.

Eight of those arrested worked for Cree. The other individuals arrested worked for two of Cree's subcontractors. Agents found that many of the illegal workers had used invalid, altered or falsified documents to illegally obtain employment, and they continue to investigate the entirety of the circumstances surrounding their employment. Those arrested were from Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, and Togo.

"ICE prioritizes worksite enforcement efforts by focusing on worksite investigations related to national security, like at Cree, as well as those related to critical infrastructure and employers who engage in egregious criminal violations," said Tom O'Connell, Resident Agent-in-Charge for ICE in Raleigh. "We appreciate Cree's efforts to work with us to make their worksite more secure. Unauthorized workers pose potential homeland security threats. Not only is their identity in question, they may also be vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists and other criminals."

All of those arrested were placed into removal proceedings. They will have an opportunity to have their deportation cases heard before an independent immigration judge.

Cree, Inc. is not a subject of the investigation. The management of Cree has been more than cooperative in the investigation. Cree has one of the most stringent hiring processes and background checks that ICE has encountered.

Today's operation is part of ICE's comprehensive strategy for worksite enforcement aimed at promoting national security, protecting critical infrastructure, and ensuring fair labor standards. As part of the strategy, ICE agents focus significant attention on facilities and companies that provide products and services to the U.S. military.

In recent weeks, ICE agents have made a number of arrests at military facilities. On October 5, ICE arrested three illegal aliens (from Indonesia & Senegal) who served as language instructors at the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Two of them were criminally charged with using false documents to gain employment and making false statements. The third was charged with being in the country illegally. The employees provided language instruction to U.S. Special Forces. On October 4, 2005, seven illegal aliens were arrested at the U.S. Air Force Base in Mountain Home, Idaho, following an investigation by ICE and the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI). The men — six from Mexico and one from Canada — were working for Nutek Construction, which was sub-contracted to build housing on the secure air base.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.